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## WASTE PASTURE LAND.

The road led up over a hill and ended in the sky, I fancy. Across it brown and tawny shadows wove, on sunny days, an intricate mesh of light and shade. Tiny lizards slipped in and out between the lichen-draped stones at its side, and great black ants scurried over the weather-scarred bark of its pines. Maybe there was a squirrel or two on the creaking pine-branches; but I am sure that none of these small creatures ever cared to go up and look over the hill into the unknown region beyond; so, as no human being ever came by, the grass-grown road was left to drop into mystery at the top of the hill.

Just this side of the tallest pine, if you looked, you might discover a bar-way, so long disused that it had nestled in among the hazels and shrubs around it and, like a chameleon, changed to the green and brown tints of its neighbours. There was space, if you pushed aside the hazels, to crawl between two bars, out into the pasture beyond; and by this entrance, one August day, my dog and I escaped from the world into our waste land.

The stubby grass was sown thick with small grasshoppers that flew up by myriads as my skirt brushed over their hiding-places. Presently a pungent, spicy smell drifted up to me, and I dropped joyously on my knee, burying my nose in the pennyroyal I had swept up by handfuls. The warm fragrance from the little dry, sage-green leaves was like the key to a box of memories, and as I rose, I pinned a tuft to my gown, that the lid of my box might not spring back again.

Nibbling a few of the small, dry stalks, I followed Don, now and then flicking off a sprig of the everlasting, which hung, dry and scentless, on its furry stalk. I felt half rebellious with it for its immortality. Of course it could not die, for it had never possessed the evanescent beauty, the transient bloom which make all the charm of life. This pale thing was born a ghost.

Over all the wide field the swarms of grasshoppers, thudding continually against my skirt, were the only live things, save Don, that I could see. The rusty chirp of invisible crickets was unceasing, and the occasional strident shriek of a locust cut the hot stillness like a buzz-saw.

As I loitered on, I found, up by an old stone-wall, a tree, a gnarled old apple-tree, twisted and bent as if with acute rheumatism. One small apple, sole offspring of its aged

parent, hung on a high twig, withered, gnarled, brown. Some former summer had called it forth from the branch, like a half-beautiful thought from a moribund heart. But the apple had withered and hung on the dead branch, incongruous.

Over the wall a small briar had clung and climbed, digging its tiny fingers into the crevices of the mossy stones. It draped their crumbling gray with its sturdy green tendrils, stayed their slipping age with its undaunted youth.

Here, in a shaded angle of the wall, I dreamed, with my hat drawn low over my eyes, dreamed till the cloud-shadows crept noiselessly over the hill to my feet, and a distant cow-bell, with its faint tinkling, warned me that night was coming to bivouac on my lone pasture-land.

CONSTANCE GROSVENOR ALEXANDER.

